

State Representative

Judy Clibborn

41st Legislative District

2006 Legislative Report

Dear Friends,

I'm back in Olympia and the 2006 Legislative Session is in full swing. It's a short session this year, which means we have just 60 days to get a lot of work done for the people of Washington State. As your representative, I pledge to stay focused on issues that matter and to listen to your thoughts and ideas. Together, I know we can protect and enrich the communities of the 41st District.

Through emails, phone calls and conversations around town, you have been letting me know what's on your mind. We've been chatting about the same topics that I want to direct my energy towards this session: improving the economy by bringing more jobs to the state, providing our kids with a first-class education and making health care more accessible.

Additionally, I'm putting your family's safety at the top of my agenda – that means safe, efficient roadways and appropriate state-level precautions in case of a major emergency.

Thank you for taking the time to stay informed. As always, I welcome your thoughts and questions

Sincerely,


Judy Clibborn



Keeping in touch

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Economic Development, Agriculture & Trade
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Children's Health

Last session, we passed a bold reform making it our state's goal – and policy – to make sure every child in this state has health coverage by 2010.

We're making a lot of progress toward that goal. Just two years ago, over 100,000 children were without health-care. Today, tens of thousands of children who couldn't afford to see a doctor a few years ago have health coverage.

This session, I'm working on legislation that will help even more children gain access to health care.

I'm sponsoring House Bill 2376, legislation requested by the Governor's office that will protect children of families within the lowest-income population. These children suffer the most because their parents can't afford to pay health care premiums. Parents earning low wages have no choice but to rely on expensive emergency care when their children get sick, stretching hospital budgets thin.

House Bill 2376 eliminates the Governor's ability to charge premiums for health insurance without first going to the legislature. This relatively small change in policy will make a sizable impact in the lives of families across the state that are struggling to make ends meet.

Managing the Budget

We're facing a rare but welcome challenge this year in the Legislature: how to manage a \$1.4 billion budget surplus. While this is unexpected, it's important for the state to manage the budget responsibly, with minimal spending, to ensure a reliable reserve.

When examining the supplemental budget this session, I will be advocating a fair and balanced approach. There are demands on the budget that are necessary in K-12 education, social services and emergency preparedness – otherwise, dollars that are not needed in these key areas should be set aside for the future.



Emergency Preparedness

Hurricane Katrina, the 9/11 terror attacks, and the possibility of a bird flu pandemic on the horizon have compelled lawmakers to analyze our state's own emergency preparedness. As Vice-Chair of the House Local Government Committee, I've been meeting with the House State Government Operations and Accountability Committee as well as the Senate Government Operations and Elections Committee to explore the ins and outs of emergency preparedness.

We must prepare for all possible emergencies, not just the one freshest in our

memories. After 9/11 we focused on terrorism. After Katrina, we focused on infrastructure and communication.

Pandemics are another matter; previous outbreaks in 1912, 1958, and 1967 teach us that securing borders and our levees is not enough. Dealing with those emergencies calls for a strategy of "Shelter in Place" - minimizing exposure to potential infection by staying home and avoiding common areas like the theater, the grocery store, or work. This will also take coordination with our employers - it may mean we work from home if at all possible.

One of my priorities when working on the supplemental budget this session will be to ensure that we do whatever it takes to prevent an avian flu outbreak. The Governor is requesting that \$100,000 be dedicated to increase surveillance and outreach activities for early detection of the avian flu in poultry.

The Legislature will also consider a number of other reforms during the 2006 Session to protect your family in case of floods or wildfires, a major earthquake or tsunami, or an eruption from Mt. Rainier.

I will work hard to see that the necessary funds are secured to ensure that Washington citizens remain safe and healthy.



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Giving our senior citizens the respect they deserve

While having lunch with my mother in the residential care center where she lives, the discussion revolved around one of her friends who learned she would have to move to an assisted care unit because she was not able to do her own diabetes blood prick test. Currently, the independence of a senior who is living in a care center can be greatly restricted. I'm sponsoring a bill that will adjust the requirements - I know that we can balance necessary care with independence for our seniors.



Elimination of the Bed Tax

Since 2003, nursing homes have charged a "bed tax" to residents. At over \$6 a patient per day, this tax has not gone unnoticed by those who struggle with the financial burden of nursing home care. I supported a provision in the 2005 budget that called for the removal of this onerous tax. As we develop the supplemental budget this session, I will work hard to protect that provision.

Home Heating Bills

This winter, I've heard from families in our district who are struggling with the dramatic increase in energy costs. Thankfully, Governor Gregoire requested legislation to get these families the immediate help they needed.

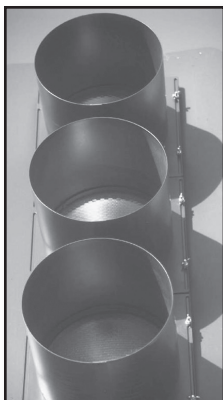
House Bill 2370, which funds low-income energy assistance, was the first bill to be passed into law this session. The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development estimates that an additional 14,120 households are eligible to receive heating assistance under the new law - at an average benefit of \$350 per household. Approximately 350 households can expect to be weatherized with this funding as well.



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Transportation

I'm honored to be serving on an additional committee this session. I was recently re-appointed to the House Transportation Committee after a one-year hiatus.

It's an exciting time to be making transportation decisions – our system is poised for real change. There's a huge backlog of work to be done in order to keep our economy growing and our citizens safe. I intend to see to it that our transportation dollars are spent wisely and effectively.

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